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CBSE STARTS WORK TO HOLD BOARD EXAMS TWICE A YEAR FROM 2025

The Ministry of Education has asked the CBSE to work out logistics for conducting board exams twice a year from the 2025-26 academic session

THERE WILL BE NO SEMESTER SYSTEM

However, no semester system will be introduced, officials said. The education ministry and the CBSE will hold consultations with school principals next month for conducting board exams twice a year. CBSE will have to restructure its academic calendar to accommodate another set of board exams without impacting the undergraduate admission schedule

MOVE TO HELP STUDENTS PERFORM WELL

- The ministry's initial plan was to introduce biannual board exams from the 2024-25 academic session; it has now been pushed back by a year
- Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had said earlier that appearing for board exams twice a year won't be mandatory for students
- Students can appear for subjects they are ready and retain the best score

NCF

THE REFORM IS BASED ON THE SUGGESTIONS IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

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EVMs get vote of confidence from Supreme Court

Petitions seeking 100% cross-verification of votes rejected; bench issues two directives

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Friday rejected all petitions seeking 100% cross-verification of votes cast on electronic voting machines (EVMs) with a Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), saying suspicions of tampering were unfounded. It also turned down pleas to revive paper ballots.

A bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Dutta delivered two separate but concurring verdicts.

"While maintaining a balanced perspective is crucial in evaluating systems or institutions, blindly distrusting any aspect of the system can breed unwarranted scepticism," the court said, adding democracy is all about striving to build harmony and trust between all institutions.

Justice Khanna in his verdict issued two directions. One, sealing and storing the Symbol Loading Unit after completing the symbol loading process for at least 45 days. And two, checking the burnt memory in the microcontrollers of 5% of EVMs for tampering per assembly constituency by a team of engineers after the results are out.

An EVM comprises three units — ballot unit, control unit and the VVPAT. All three are embedded with microcontrollers, which have a burnt memory from the manufacturer.

The request to verify the microcontrollers can be made by candidates who stand second or third in the elections. A written request has to be made within seven days after the results are announced. Those who make the request would foot the verification bill. But if an EVM is found tampered, the money would be refunded.

Return to ballot paper unsound

"We must reject as foible and unsound the submission to return to the ballot paper system. The weakness of the ballot paper system is well known and documented," the bench said in its verdict

Besides, the bench suggested that the ECI examine the possibility of machine counting of the VVPAT paper slips and see if it could add a bar code for each party along with the party symbol in the slips.

Justice Dipankar Datta in his separate judgment said there seems to be a concerted effort to discredit, diminish and weaken India's progress on every possible frontier and any such attempt has to be "nipped in the bud". He added that EVMs have stood the test of time and the increased voting percentage was sufficient reason to hold that the voters have reposed faith in the current system.

From left: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his son Yathindra cast their vote at Siddaramanahundi in Mysuru on Friday. JDS supremo HD Deve Gowda exercises his franchise at Paduvalahippe of Hassan district. An elderly woman waits for her turn at a booth in Bantwal taluk of Dakshina Kannada constituency | EXPRESS

Woman suffers cardiac arrest, doc saves her

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

A woman in her fifties, who suffered a cardiac arrest in a polling booth in the city on Friday, was saved by a doctor who was waiting in a queue there to exercise his franchise.

The incident occurred at the government school in Jumbo Savari Dinne, JP Nagar, 8th Phase.

The woman collapsed in front of **Dr Ganesh Srinivasa Prasad** in the booth (No 210) around 9am. Dr Prasad immediately resorted to Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and saved her life.

Dr Prasad, 36, hails from Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh. He works as a nephrologist at Narayana Health Centre in Bommasandra.

The woman collapsed while taking water from a can at the booth. "I checked her pulse but did not feel it. She was gasping for breath and I immediately resorted to CPR till her condition improved," Dr Prasad told *TNIE*. P2

Polling peaceful, 14 constituencies in K'taka record 69.23% turnout

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

FOURTEEN constituencies in south and coastal Karnataka went to polls on Friday in Phase-2 of 2024 Lok Sabha elections, recording a polling percentage of 69.23 at 9.45 pm — much better than 68.80 recorded in 28 constituencies in 2019. Phase-3 polling for the rest of the 14 constituencies will be held on May 7.

In 2019, the same 14 constituencies, which went to polls on Friday, recorded an average poll percentage of 68.96. It was 67.73 in 2014.

Karnataka polling percentage, so far, is better than the national average of 67.40.

Chief Electoral Officer of Karnataka Manoj Kumar Meena told *TNIE* that the rise in voter turnout is because of the increased awareness among people.

The highest voting percentage of 81.48 was recorded in Mandya, followed by Kolar 78.07. The lowest percentage of 52.81 was recorded in Bangalore Central, while the largest constituency in Karnataka, Bangalore North, recorded 54.42.

The four constituencies in Bengaluru — Bangalore Rural, Bangalore North, Bangalore South and Bangalore Central — recorded an average polling percentage of 56.91 — marginally poorer than the poll percentage of 56.94 recorded in 2019. But the figure is likely to marginally improve as the final percentage is taken into account. P4

Furniture at a poll booth damaged by villagers in Indiganatha village in Hanur taluk of Chamarajanagar district on Friday | EXPRESS

Villagers vandalise booth near MM Hills, burn EVMs

Mysuru: Tension prevailed at Indiganatha village in Male Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary on Friday when people set fire to electronic voting machines (EVMs) in a polling booth there and attacked election officials for "forcing" them to exercise their franchise. The agitators had decided to boycott polling in protest against lack of basic amenities | P4

Gandhi buzz in Amethi, Rae Bareli

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

WITH the second phase of the general elections done and dusted — where Rahul Gandhi was a candidate in Wayanad — all eyes are on Saturday's Congress Election Committee meeting, which is expected to take its call on Rae Bareli and Amethi, the two bastions of Gandhi family in Uttar Pradesh.

The meeting comes amid intense speculation on the party fielding Rahul from Amethi and party leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra from Rae Bareli.

Highly-placed sources said both Priyanka and Rahul are likely to visit Ayodhya for a darshan of Ram Lalla before heading to Amethi and Rae Bareli. The buzz around Rahul's candidature from Amethi picked up momentum from the fact that besides the renovation of the Congress office there, the guest house on the premises was also white washed.

The process of filing nomination papers for both Amethi and Rae Bareli began on Friday and will continue till May 3. Sources claim that after the formal announcement of his candidature, Rahul may file his nomination papers from Amethi on May 1 or 2. However, there is no official word on it.

A senior Congress leader hinted at the possibility of back-to-back filing of nomination papers by both Rahul and Priyanka during the narrow window between May 1 and May 3.

However, the possibility of Robert Vadra, Priyanka's husband, getting the Amethi ticket cannot be ruled out. Vadra had earlier gone vocal, claiming that the people of Amethi wanted him to represent them.

Over 65% turnout in 2nd phase polls

Young voters after casting their votes at Purameri, Kozhikode | EXPRESS

BRISK POLLING IN TRIPURA, LOW TURNOUT IN U.P.

STATE	VOTING	J&K	71.21%	Maharasthra	58.57%
Tripura	79.46%	Assam	71.11%	Madhya Pradesh	55.77%
Manipur	77.32%	Kerala	70.35%	Bihar	55.08%
Chhattisgarh	73.05%	Karnataka	69.23%	Uttar Pradesh	54.83%
West Bengal	71.84%	Rajasthan	62.46%	(Source: ECI)	

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

IN a relatively improved showing, the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections recorded over 65% voter turnout covering 88 seats across 13 states. The highest voting percentage was recorded in Tripura at 78.53% while the lowest was in Uttar Pradesh at 54.85%.

Kerala, Karnataka and Rajasthan accounted for more than half the seats. Elections to 14 seats were held in Karnataka, 13 seats in Rajasthan, 8 seats each in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, 6 seats in Madhya Pradesh, 5 seats each in Assam and Bihar, 3 seats each in Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, and 1 seat each in Manipur, Tripura and Jammu and Kashmir.

All eyes are on the high stakes battle in Kerala, where the BJP has been aggressively working to open its account. The contests in Wayanad, where former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi is contesting, and Thiruvananthapuram where Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar is pitted against sitting MP Shashi Tharoor, are keenly watched.

Other top guns in the fray include actor-turned-politician Arun Govil in Meerut, Karnataka deputy CM D K Shivakumar's brother D K Suresh in Bangalore Rural, and former Karnataka chief minister H D Kumaraswamy (JDS) in Mandya. BJP's Hema Malini, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat are seeking a hattrick of wins from Uttar Pradesh's Mathura, Rajasthan's Kota and Jodhpur, respectively.

With the conclusion of the second phase, voting has been completed in 14 states/UTs.

EXPRESS READ

Small arms, foreign-made pistols seized in Sandeshkhali

New Delhi: New Delhi: A day after registering an FIR against five accused in a case linked to the land grab and assault on women, the CBI on Friday conducted raids at multiple locations in Sandeshkhali and recovered foreign-made weapons and a large cache of ammunition. Friday's raids were conducted as part of probe into the attack on an Enforcement Directorate team by a mob.

Indian-origin student arrested in US over pro-Palestine protests

New York: An Indian-origin female student studying at the prestigious Princeton University is among two students who have been arrested and barred from the campus for staging pro-Palestine protests on the campus. Achinthya Sivalingan, born in Coimbatore and raised in Columbus, now faces disciplinary action, the varsity said.

Modi factor very much in play in 'mini-India' Malkajgiri

SWETHAVIMALA M & MANDA RAVINDER REDDY @ Hyderabad

THE three-cornered contest in Telangana's Malkajgiri constituency, which elected the state's current Chief Minister Revanth Reddy as a Congress MP in 2019, may be a foregone conclusion.

SHOWTIME FOR GLADIATORS

The Congress has fielded a recent entrant from BRS, Patnam Suneetha Mahender Reddy, while the BRS candidate is a turncoat from the Congress, Ragidi Laxma Reddy. The BJP candidate Eatala Rajender was a minister in the KCR government and switched over from the BRS in 2021.

Who is the front-runner? A 45-year-old businessman from Kukatpally, Mahesh, who identified himself as a member of the Congress, did not hesitate for a moment when asked who he would support this time. "It's Modi at the Centre. I believe in Modi and would vote for the BJP," he said.

Mahesh is not alone in rooting for the saffron party. Several voters from Malkajgiri constituency said they would vote for the BJP.

Dhanalakota Shravan Kumar, a traditional artiste from Quthbullapur — one of the seven suburban Assembly segments making up the Malkajgiri LS seat — reasoned: "If I vote for Congress, my vote would be wasted as the party might not come to power at the Centre. As for the BRS, they have lost power in Telangana." Most of Shravan's neighbours shared similar views.

Though all seven segments of the Malkajgiri constituency voted for the BRS in the November 2023 Assembly elections, it appears that the saffron party has an edge in the LS polls. Eatala Rajender claims people are with PM Narendra Modi, whose 1.3-km roadshow in Malkajgiri on March 15 saw a massive response. Rajendar, who quit BRS after an acrimonious fallout with former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao, told this paper recently during Hyderabad Dialogues that the party can win 12 out of the 17 seats in the state, including Malkajgiri.

ILLUSTRATION: MANOJAH PRADHAN

The constituency, established in 2009 following delimitation, has 37.47 lakh voters, with over 90% belonging to urban and suburban areas. With a sizable population of migrant settlers from other states including Tamil Nadu due to the presence of Central government institutions, Malkajgiri is deemed 'Mini India'.

Since the seat came into being in 2009, the Congress has won twice and the TDP once — in 2014, when it was in alliance with the BJP. P5

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